

On the status of *Puffinus assimilis baroli* in the Azores archipelago

by DAVID BANNERMAN

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In the *Ibis* 1914, in a paper entitled the Distribution and Nidification of the Tubinares in the North Atlantic Islands, under a sub-heading *Breeding range in the Azores*, I dealt with the status, as then understood, of the Madeiran Little Shearwater, or as it was then termed the Atlantic Allied Shearwater, *Puffinus assimilis baroli* Bonaparte, in the Archipelago. F. Du Cane Godman was the first Englishman to mention it from the islands in his *Natural History of the Azores* 1870 p. 39 where, under the name *Puffinus obscurus* (Gmelin), against which he places a question mark, he wrote: "People living in the island of Flores told me that there was a smaller bird than the last species (i.e. *P. anglorum* = *Puffinus puffinus puffinus*) but similar in form, colour and habits. Hence I conclude it is *P. obscurus*. It is said to arrive about the month of March and to breed in the cliffs. It had reared its young and gone before I was there, and I did not obtain, or even see, a specimen; neither did I hear of it in the other islands . . ." Bocage had already mentioned the species from the Azores (*Jorn. Acad. Sci. Lisboa* 1866) and so had Simroth (*Archiv für. Naturg.* 1888) but there is no mention of nesting in either account. Ogilvie-Grant in 1903 obtained an adult from Praia islet, off Graciosa, secured by fishermen and recorded a specimen from the island of Pico which he had examined in the museum at Ponta Delgada, together with two other specimens—all adult birds. Up to that time no definite *proof* of breeding in the Azores, although suspected, was forthcoming. In two expeditions on behalf of the American Museum of Natural History, Sr. José Correia failed to find the Little Shearwater either in 1921/22 or in 1927/28 although collecting actively in April, May, June and July during the breeding season. Nor were the two local collectors employed by the Frenchmen M. M. Mayaud and the late J. de Chavigny any more successful. In the report of the collections (*Alauda* 1932) there is no mention of the Little Shearwater in the main text but in an *addendum* to the paper (p. 429) the authors observe "Nidification probable," citing Godman and Ogilvie-Grant as their authorities for that assumption.

That was still the state of affairs in 1963 when volume 1 of my *Birds of the Atlantic Islands* was published. At that date there was no published proof of breeding, and in view of one or two statements which Godman had made with reference to some other species "breeding" in the Canaries, Madeira and Azores, I was not inclined to put too much value on his statement in *Ibis* 1866 p.104 concerning the probable nesting of *P. a. baroli* in the cliffs of Flores, a statement repeated word for word in his book (1870). The finding by fishermen of an adult male on Praia islet, now preserved in the British Museum, was the only indirect evidence of nesting in the Archipelago. I therefore wrote in my book (1963 p. 10) that there is as yet no indication that it *P. a. baroli* breeds in the Azores. It would have been more accurate to have written "There is as yet no *proof* that it breeds". That first volume dealt with the breeding of the Madeiran Little Shearwater in the Canaries and the Salvage Islands only. My

reference to its nesting in the Azores and the Madeira group was given when discussing the general distribution of the race.

Since working on my second volume which deals specifically with the birds of Madeira and the Azores I have visited all the islands personally and have tried to check all former references to the petrels and shearwaters. The curators of the museums in Funchal (Mr. G. E. Maul) and in Ponta Delgada (Sr. José Maria Alvares Cabral) have most courteously provided me with lists of all the specimens in their respective museums and, as regards the Azores, Sr. Cabral has listed six examples of *Puffinus assimilis baroli*, all adults except one which was marked as an immature "juv". Juvenile petrels do not necessarily imply birds which have been bred locally, and though highly suggestive, I did not consider it a cast iron breeding record. I have however now received a letter from Sr. Cabral telling me of a visit to the museum at Ponta Delgada of a lady ornithologist, Dr. Sigrid Knecht, already known for her researches on the birds of the Canaries and Azores, who requested to examine all the specimens of *P. a. baroli* in the museum collection. In granting this request he had a search made in the cabinets and was astonished to find among them a *nestling* of *Puffinus assimilis baroli*. He immediately wrote to me as follows:

"Je vous ai induit en erreur en vous envoyant la liste des oiseaux des Açores du Musée de Ponta Delgada. Voici les corrections que je crois devois être apportées: Le No. 1500 . . . est un mâle, qui a été capturé au nid avec un poussin (nestling) et qui porte le No. 1501. Le préparateur du Musée se rappelle de les avoir tués le même jour, le 15 Avril 1951 . . . De cette façon, il reste établi que ce Puffin niche, au moins parfois, au Açores."

The error in describing this specimen "Juv" in place of "nestling" must not be attributed to Sr. Cabral it having been copied from the label by an assistant. When Sr. Cabral himself saw the specimen, he at once realized the importance of the discovery and communicated with me immediately. When in the Azores, in 1963, I visited the well-known naturalist Colonel Agostinho in the island of Terceira and asked him if he could confirm the breeding of *P. a. baroli* in the Archipelago. He assured me that it had never actually been found breeding and was extremely rare. He too was unaware of the "nestling" in the museum collection in Ponta Delgada. It is very satisfactory to at last confirm it as a breeding bird after all these years, but whether or not this was the species which Godman reported (at second hand) as breeding in the cliffs of Flores still remains to be confirmed.

It should be emphasized that the nestling in the Ponta Delgada Museum was added to the collection before Sr. Cabral took charge of the collection. It had not therefore come to his notice earlier.

Partial albinism in a Redpoll

by R. E. SCOTT

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Sage (1963) during his study of albinism in British birds makes no specific mention of the Redpoll *Carduelis flammea* and it would seem worthwhile to place on record this example of almost symmetrical partial